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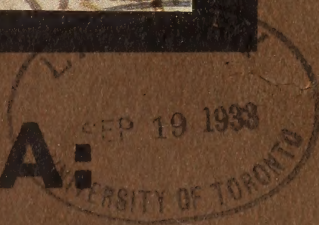
# KATRINA:

A BALLAD OF THE KITCHEN  
AND OTHER NEW POEMS

BY


A. VINE HALL.

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BY

A. VINE HALL

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## KATRINA

---

Katrina is our coloured cook,  
Of pedigree improper ;  
She takes the path her parents took,  
And defies the world to stop her.

On Sunday to the Church she goes—  
Ag tog ! how grand her dress is !  
Her Jakob, in his Sunday clo'es,  
Sits by her, and confesses

That none is half so fine as she.  
Quite long enough they've tarried ;  
Now that their children number three,  
They really must get married.

Converse with her : what she may say  
Accept with some precautions ;  
Her age enquire : not in a day  
Develop such proportions.

Perplexedly she looks at you,  
And then replies : “ It either  
Is twenty-seven or seventy-two.”  
Her mother says it’s neither.

Does she with dinner-time play tricks?  
Remember, ere you scold her,  
Half seven, to her, is half-past six—  
Bi-lingual coils enfold her.

And other : since the truth is tame,  
And fiction far excells it,  
(Nor work an all-absorbing aim)  
She very rarely tells it.

“ Can you bake bread ? ” “ No, missis, no ! ”  
“ Well then, Katrina, try it—  
Here is Boer meal.” She tries, and lo !  
(No baker will deny it)



A lordlier loaf ne'er slipped from tin!—

What's *your* gift, friend? Don't hide it :  
Perhaps you play the violin,  
Although you never tried it.

“You wash and iron, Katrina—no?

Yet from the river gaily,  
Bearing a mighty ball of snow  
Upon your head, you daily

Went past our door!” Katrina tried.

O magic of endeavour!  
Collars, and cuffs too,—glorified!  
Foo Chang is not more clever.

She does not deem it theft to steal

Food guarded insecurely :  
To help relations to a meal  
Is common kindness surely !

Importunate are they no doubt ;  
And marvellously many ;—  
But you can leave your purse about  
And never miss a penny.

She from the depth of dire despair  
Emerges when you praise her ;  
Sardines or snoek into a rare  
Blue heaven of rapture raise her.

Let her of funerals relate—  
A favourite recreation !  
Dickens is doubly out of date,  
Lacking her animation.

“ Ag, Missis, it was mooï, baïe mooï !  
A long corpse—thirteen coaches ! ”  
Her own (she thinks of it with joy)  
Will merit no reproaches.

Three carriages—she's paid for three  
For years, from monthly wages.  
Dog-eared the book of life may be,  
But not its final pages.

Our big tom-cat (he's tortoise-shell,  
And so we call him Carrot),  
And Grip, the terrier, love her well ;  
And Mordecai the parrot.

All children like the kind brown face ;  
Our Jimmy loves it dearly ;—  
Not much is wrong where that's the case :  
A child's eyes see so clearly.

Two toddlers (when her cousin died,  
And the white man forsook them,  
Nor for his own babes would provide)  
She took—of course she took them !

A generous, kindly, thriftless folk ;  
Not rigidly teetotal ;  
With keen enjoyment of a joke ;  
Profusely anecdotal.

'Tis said that ladies known as " chars,"  
In other great Dominions,  
Drive to the door in motor cars—  
Gay birds with painted pinions !

Katrina unto these would be  
A most tremendous shocker ;  
But to the many who, like me,  
Can sport no golden knocker,

And to our mothers, sisters, wives,  
Her other name is—Leisure.  
Oh, you're the worry of our lives,  
Katrina, and—a treasure !



## THE REPROOF

---

It is to be regretted  
That though our Davy deeply is indebted  
Unto his mother, who aspires  
To quite exemplary tuition,  
Occasions come when he requires  
Paternal admonition.  
And this, to-day, with due solemnity,  
I gave ; while he,  
For five long minutes, most attentively,  
But with averted face,  
Listened ; as conscious (I supposed)  
Of my displeasure, and his own disgrace.  
When my discourse, at length, impressively I  
closed,  
He said (eager as one who claims a goal) :  
“ Father ! the fifty-seventh ant is coming from  
that hole ! ”

## THE VEGETARIANS

---

I sing of food, food to affright

The most voracious appetite !

Tremble not, gentle reader :

Roast missionary hot (or cold, with salad)

Is not the theme of this authentic ballad ;

Nor horrid cannibal feeder.

But our twin boys ; by the profane,

Who honest Christian names disdain,

Rechristened Huz and Buz.

Can any hopefully contend with two ?

Whatever one of them resolves to do

The other also does.

Hence all this trouble. It began

When John was missing from the span—

An ox they doted on.

“Where’s John ?” they ask. Imagine their dismay

On hearing Klaas, our coloured herd-boy, say :

“ John beef—you’ve eaten John.”

Incredible ! In dire distress  
They rush to me, and I confess  
    To crime beyond belief.  
Yes, part of John had furnished our repast.  
They stand before me speechless and aghast.  
    For them, henceforth, no beef.

Lamb and mint sauce, with fresh young peas,  
Is commonly supposed to please  
    The most fastidious glutton.  
Why are they waiting ? Great is their relief  
To learn that it is mutton and not beef.  
    “ But, mother, what is mutton ? ”

She bids them eat, and not to talk.  
They taste it. “ Mother, did it walk ? ”  
    Adieu my pleasant dinners !  
The dreadful truth is told. “ A little sheep !  
O mother, mother ! ” In the gravy weep  
    Two miserable sinners.

To-day the fish was under ban,  
For they had found a wicked man  
    Fishing beside a stream !  
They saw the food of which they oft partook,  
Alive, and wriggling on a cruel hook ;  
    And scarce forbore to scream.

I fear their faith in parents failed.  
“ You said it didn’t walk,” they wailed ;  
    “ You didn’t say it thwimmed ! ”  
Have we advanced, I wonder ! we, the wise,—  
We who have looked, even on war, with eyes  
    No foolish pity dimmed ?



## “BE OF GOOD CHEER”

(*St. John xvi. 33*)

---

The bravest deem it horrible to die  
As rat in hole. I gained the deck : to be  
A limpet clinging for dear life ; the sea,  
Range after snow-capped range, careering by ;  
All Hell, exultant, screaming through the sky.  
The pilot to the wheel was lashed ; yet he  
Turned for a moment, turned and smiled at me !  
“ The pilot smiles ! I can go back,” said I.

This maddened world of ours how fast it flies—  
Speeding adown enormous gulfs of gloom !  
The Powers of Darkness glorying in its doom.  
—Yet, 'mid the welter of a sea more wild,  
And Calvary close ahead, the Pilot's eyes  
Turned to His trembling friends, and lo,—  
He smiled !

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